
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

National Register Multiple Property Document

20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, DC, 1912-1974

Meeting Date: October 28, 2021
Applicant: DC Preservation League
Affected ANC: N/A

The Historic Preservation Office recommends that the Board adopt the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Document, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, DC, 1912-1974* and forward it to the National Register of Historic Places.

Background

The National Register Multiple Property Document (MPD) is a form which develops and narrates the historic context(s) and develops evaluation criteria for groups of related significant properties. The Multiple Property Document is a cover document and not a nomination form in its own right; instead it serves as the basis for understanding and evaluating individual properties associated with the established theme(s) for listing in the National Register. The form facilitates the evaluation of individual properties by providing an historic understanding of them within a specific geographic area and also by providing a list of identified resources that allow for a more accurate comparison of known resources at the time of evaluation of a property. A completed and adopted form may be used to nominate and designate thematically related historic properties simultaneously, and it may be used to evaluate and designate related properties in the future. The D.C. Historic Preservation Office currently has several Multiple Property Documents that it uses regularly, including the most-of-often used ones for apartment buildings and D.C. Public Schools.

The National Register Multiple Property Document presented here, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C., 1912-1974* was prepared by the D.C. Preservation League with funds granted to the League by the National Park Service as part of its 20th Century African American Civil Rights Grant Fund. The document was informed by and is an extension of an established NPS document, "Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites." The MPD developed for D.C. under this framework provides important background information on African American history in D.C., from 1791 to 1912, leading up to the 20th century civil rights movement. It then provides an historic context of civil rights in D.C. from the growth of organized resistance in 1912 when the D.C. Branch of the NAACP opened, to 1974 when Home Rule was established in the District. Within this timeframe and broad theme, the document establishes and develops six historic contexts:

1. The Struggle for Access to Public Accommodations in Washington, D.C., 1912-1964
2. Equal Employment & Economic Justice: Demands for Access to Jobs and Fair Wages in Washington, D.C., 1912-1974

3. Criminalization and Policing: Washington D.C.'s Black Citizens Fight for Freedom from Violence, 1912-1974
4. The Campaign to End Racial Covenants and Housing Discrimination in Washington, D.C., 1921-1968
5. The Legal Campaign for Equal Education in Washington, D.C., 1944-1967
6. African American Demands for Suffrage and Home Rule in Washington, D.C., 1930-1974

The narrative statements in each of these historic contexts are thoroughly researched and presented and provide a good comprehensive understanding of their histories. The document recognizes that sites associated with civil rights events and persons represent a wide range of property types from the residences of notable persons to religious, commercial, institutional, recreational and other facilities. To best capture the wide range of resources, the document has created four broad Associated Property Types: Strategy Centers; Conflict Centers; Properties Associated with Key Persons; and Historic Districts. As these property types have more to do with the buildings' associations to the civil rights movement than the original building type or use, they have been further classified into property sub-types that follow that more traditional architectural typology, such as church, residence, school, business, social institution, etc. In addition to describing the Property Types, the document then describes the significance of the property types and the registration requirements for evaluating individual properties within those categories.

Importantly, the MPD includes an appendix showing properties identified as part of this study having associations with 20th Century African American Civil Rights. The list of 125 identified properties is not likely exhaustive, but more than comprehensive, and will serve to facilitate the comparison of properties when they are being evaluated, whether already on the list or newly identified.

This MPD provides extensive and valuable information on the properties associated with 20th century African American history and their association with civil rights. This will be a critical document, particularly as HPO seeks to increase the number of sites associated with under-represented communities in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places. The document is especially crucial in this designation effort as many of those places not already lost continue to be threatened with development and other pressures.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board adopt the Multiple Property Document, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington D.C.* and forward the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.